DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 159 950 HE 010 286

TITLE	An Introduction to the Open University.
INSTITUTION	Open Univ., Walton, Bletchley, Bucks (England).
PUB DATE	77
NOTE	24p.
AVAILABLE FROM	The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes, England MK7 6AA
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Adult Students; Assignments; College Administration; *Correspondence Study; Educational Counseling; Educational Finance; Educational Radio; *Educational Television; *External Degree Programs; Foreign Countries; Graduate Study; Higher Education; Independent Study; Nontraditional Students; *Open Education; Staff Utilization; Student Application; *Student Characteristics; Undergraduate Study
IDENTIFIERS	Great Britain; *Open University (England)

ABSTRACT

This introduction to the Open University contains an historical overview; a description of undergraduate, postgraduate, and associate-level courses of study; and information on course components, including printed material, television and radio, tuition and counseling, assignments and assessments, summer school, and course teams. Data and information are provided on: the types of staff employed by the University; student applications and admissions for 1971-77; student sex and date of birth for 1971-76; occupations of applicants; and the educational background of graduates. The structure of the University, student participation, finance, and the success of the system are discussed. (SW)

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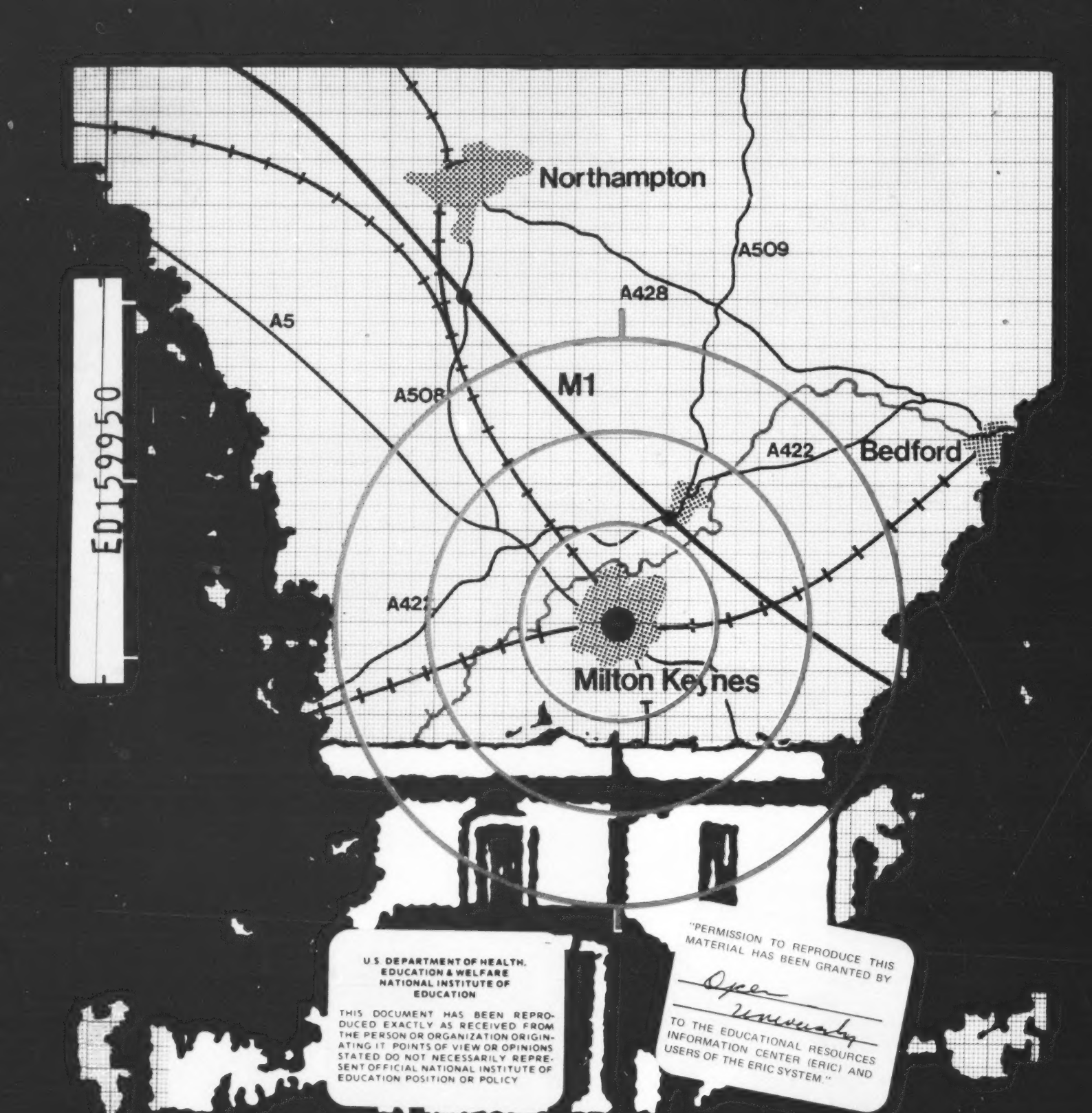

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An introduction to THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

HE 010 286

The Open University
Walton Hall
Milton Keynes MK7 6AA

This edition published 1977

Prepared by Information Services Department

Printed in Great Britain by
Thamesdown Litho, Swindon

IS/BL-KP/877/12000

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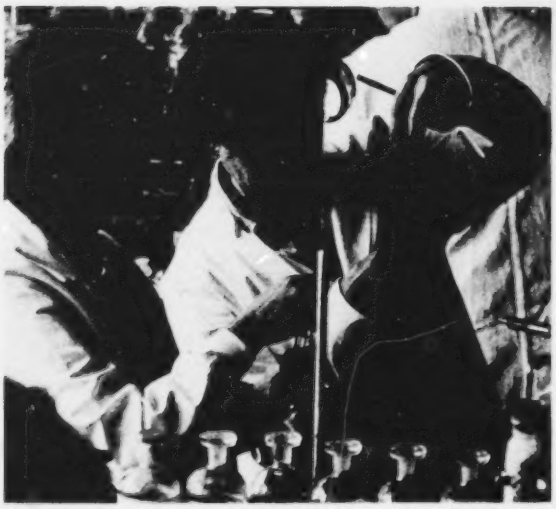


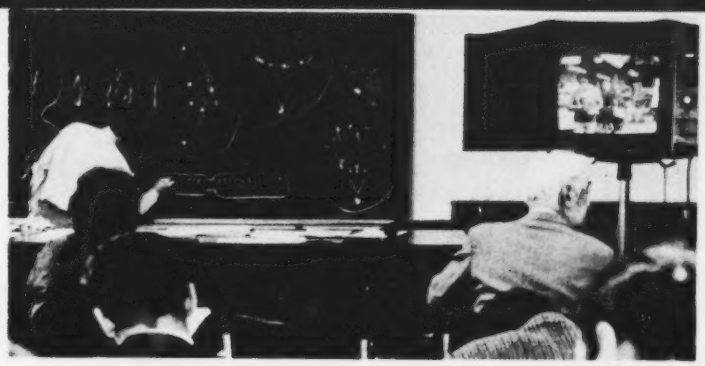
1 Introduction

The Open University has been described as the most important innovation in British education in the last half-century. Its significance lies not only in its multi-media distance teaching methods, but also in its philosophical concept of openness – providing university-level education for all those who are capable of it, regardless of their age, status, or previous academic qualifications.

Unlike most other universities, in the Open University students and staff do not come together on a campus. Instead, a central core of academic and administrative personnel at the University's headquarters produce distance teaching materials which are sent directly to students' homes throughout the country. Open University students are working adults who live at home and study in their spare time.

The University's 'open' teaching system allows students to study at their own pace; they can drop out of the system between courses and start studying again at their convenience. They can take virtually any combination of courses from a wide range of disciplines.

Finally, the Open University is open to all. No qualifications are needed to apply; admission is mainly on a first-come first-served basis. Britain's 'university of the second chance' has opened the door for thousands of adults who previously had little or no opportunity to continue their education.



Students at a study centre for a tutorial.

2 History

In 1963 the Leader of the Opposition, Harold Wilson, announced his idea for a University of the Air, a home-study university using the broadcasting media as an integral part of its teaching system.

The idea of using mass media to educate adults was not a new one. As early as the 1950s suggestions were made that broadcasting should be used more purposively for education. The BBC and Department of Education and Science were already considering ideas for extending their joint efforts in this direction. The time was right for Mr Wilson's political pronouncement.

The Robbins Report on Higher Education, published in 1963, further reinforced Wilson's aim. The report claimed that there was an untapped pool of adults who could benefit from a university education but had 'missed out' for various reasons earlier in their lives.

In Britain at that time only six or seven per cent of school leavers went on each year to any form of full-time higher education (including teacher training and technical education). This compared badly with North America, the USSR and Japan. As evidence of demand for some institution other than residential universities, there were 20,000 UK students currently studying for University of London External Degrees (some 7,000 of them by correspondence). There were also half a million others taking correspondence courses of some kind.

The Open University came about as a response to this demand. In 1964 Mr Wilson, as the Prime Minister, asked Jennie Lee, then a junior minister in the Department of Education and Science, to take special responsibility for the University of the Air project. She established an Advisory Committee which produced a White Paper in 1966. The White Paper suggested that this new university for adults should combine the use of television and radio with correspondence texts, tutorials, practical work and discussion groups. It recommended that a planning committee examine its proposals in detail.

The Planning Committee was set up in 1967 under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Venables who later became the first Pro-Chancellor of the Open University. The Planning Committee Report, published in 1969, confirmed that the University's main objective was to offer 'a second chance' to those deprived of higher education: 'Without a doubt there has been a substantial, though slowly diminishing proportion of people able enough to enter higher education who were born too soon to reap the benefits of increased educational opportunity.'

The Report reiterated the need for post-experience and refresher courses as well as broad-based degree courses. It recommended the system of credits previously outlined in the White Paper. It also introduced the concept of foundation courses – first year courses designed to suit students from differing educational backgrounds.

By the time the Report was published, Dr Walter Perry[1] had been appointed Vice-Chancellor and Mr Anastasios Christodoulou became Secretary of the University. The University's permanent headquarters were established in the new city of Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, forty-five miles north-west of London.

In 1969 a Royal Charter established the Open University as 'an independent and autonomous institution' authorized to confer its own degrees. Twenty-four thousand students started studying with the University in 1971, its first teaching year.

Today about 64,000 working adults are studying with the Open University, and 21,000 have already graduated with BA degrees.

[1] Now Sir Walter: he was knighted in 1974.

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3 Courses of study

The Open University offers three programmes of study – undergraduate, postgraduate and self-contained associate student courses.

Undergraduate

At undergraduate level the University awards the BA and BA(Honours) degrees. Degrees are built up on a credit system. A credit is awarded to a student who completes a one-year course (late January to November) on the basis of continuous assessment and a three-hour final examination. Six undergraduate credits qualify a student for the ordinary degree and eight credits are needed for the honours degree.

Because a one-year credit course requires 32 weekly units of work (each demanding 10–14 hours of study), it is expected that many students will take about six years to get an ordinary degree and eight years for an honours degree. However, it is possible to graduate in three years, because students can take a maximum of two courses each year. If a student has already successfully completed a period of study at a higher educational level elsewhere, he may be awarded up to three general credit exemptions. In this way the Open University enables him to 'top up' his existing qualifications to degree standard.

The University's courses are offered at four levels – foundation, second, third and fourth. All students start with a foundation course, a broadly-based introductory course which assumes no prior knowledge of the subject. These interdisciplinary courses are offered by five of the faculties – Arts, Social Sciences, Mathematics, Science and Technology. The sixth faculty, Educational Studies, starts its courses at second level.

After foundation level, students can make up their own programme of study by taking virtually any combination of courses. In 1977 there will be more than 100 course options. A student's freedom of choice to design his own personal degree structure is enhanced by half-credit courses lasting 16 to 18 weeks. There is even greater flexibility in science, where the faculty has produced some one-third and one-sixth courses which may be combined as half credits.

Postgraduate

Postgraduate studies are at present all research-based; there are not, as yet, any postgraduate courses. The three higher degrees – BPhil, MPhil and PhD – are awarded when a student completes a programme of research or advanced study and submits a dissertation or thesis. A student's progress is assessed by means of research credits which are earned by completing three months' full-time work or its part-time equivalent. It is necessary to obtain a required number of research credits before submitting written work for a degree. The award of the degree is based solely on the examination of the completed dissertation or thesis.

Of the University's 390 postgraduate students, there are 50 full-time students supported by grant-giving bodies. These students are based at the University's headquarters in Milton Keynes and at the Oxford Research Unit. Another 285 postgraduate students are working independently in their own time and at their own expense (unless aided by local authorities or employers) and are supervised jointly by Open University academics and by external supervisors appointed by the University. In addition, 55 members of the University's full-time staff, mostly course and research assistants, are working toward higher degrees.

Associate student

In 1978 there will be 34 full-length associate student courses, which are self-contained and last for ten months. These are non-degree courses designed for students who wish to extend their knowledge of their own career or acquire knowledge of a new field.

Associate student courses use all the elements of the undergraduate teaching system; some courses carry credit that may count toward a BA degree if a student decides to register for a degree programme later. A Course Certificate is awarded to students who complete the course work and pass a final examination, and students who finish the course but do not sit the examination receive a Letter of Course Completion. Four of the courses lead collectively to a Diploma in Reading Development, the University's first Diploma.

In 1973, the first year the programme was offered, 2,012 students took post-experience courses as they were then called. In June 1977 there were 6,200 students enrolled in the programme.

4 Teaching

During the planning stages from 1966 to 1969 the original concept of a University of the Air – emphasizing television and radio teaching – was greatly modified. By the time the Open University came into being it was clear that a variety of distance teaching methods would be used to reach the University's home-based students. Broadcasting has become only one medium among many.

Table 1 shows the various components of the teaching system and approximately how much time an average student spends on each. A course credit requires about 10–14 hours of study per week for a total of 32 weeks. Most of a student's time is spent at home where he receives correspondence material by post and watches and listens to broadcasts.

During the year students can attend local study centres close to their homes for tutorials and discussion groups. In addition, some courses require a one-week residential summer school.

Throughout the course students take self-administered tests and do written assignments. Assignment grades combined with a final examination determine whether a student earns his credit.

TABLE 1 COURSE COMPONENTS

Course components	Student response	Approximate time spent
(i) Printed material *a*) Correspondence texts *b*) Set books *c*) Recommended reading	Systematic reading	65%
(ii) Television and radio *a*) Course broadcasts on television *b*) Course broadcasts on radio	Regular viewing and listening	10%
(iii) Tuition and counselling *a*) Individual and group tuition *b*) Individual and group counselling *c*) Summer schools	Contact with tutors and counsellors; attending study centres; meeting other students; attending summer schools.	15%
(iv) Assignments and assessments *a*) Practical experiments and self-assessment *b*) Tutor-marked assignments *c*) Computer-marked assignments *d*) Examinations	Doing practical work or projects; doing written work; taking examinations.	10%

methods

Correspondence material

The correspondence text is the most important component of a course; broadly, each text 'unit' represents a week's work. A full course lasting 32 weeks will consist of 32 texts bound in ten to fifteen volumes and sent to students at regular intervals through the year. Course units are large-format (297 × 210 mm) paperback books, usually of about 48 pages, well printed and illustrated with pictures and diagrams. The typographical design allows margins wide enough for students to take notes and answer self-assessment questions. The units form the core of the week's work and are integrated with reading material, assignments and broadcasts.

In addition to the course units, most courses also include required reading in 'set books' which students are expected to buy for regular reference. The number of set books required depends on the nature of the course. A mathematics course may prescribe only one set book, while an arts course may have as many as 15 novels, critical studies and essays for required reading. Some set books are specially written or edited by Open University academics to supplement the course. These include 'readers' which are compilations of relevant articles by a variety of authors.

Students also receive a list of books which they are recommended to read. They are not expected to buy these. More often students borrow books from local libraries if they wish to pursue particular parts of the course in greater detail.

Home experiment kits

In order to overcome the problem of teaching science and technology at a distance, students are sent home experiment kits which enable them to do basic experimental work in their own homes. The apparatus can be quite sophisticated. For example, the home experiment kit for the science foundation course includes 272 pieces of equipment – more than 100 chemicals, glassware, and a miniature microscope specially designed for the University. The kit for the technology foundation course includes a binary computing device and a noisemeter.

Students work at home. Above – filling in a computer-marked assignment. Below – using apparatus from a science home experiment kit.

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Television and radio

Almost every Open University course incorporates both radio and television broadcasts. These programmes, produced in partnership with the British Broadcasting Corporation, are transmitted nationally on BBC television and VHF radio 3 and 4. Transmission is usually in the early evenings Monday to Friday, on Saturday and Sunday mornings and early weekday mornings around breakfast time.

Each foundation course has a weekly radio and television programme. Second, third and fourth level courses usually have fewer broadcasts. Along with the correspondence material, students are sent broadcast notes that help link the programmes with written material.

Broadcasts are designed as an integral part of the course, although some are more necessary to an understanding of the course than others. Science and Technology programmes that demonstrate practical work are virtually essential to the course. Social Sciences and Educational Studies use case studies on television to illustrate concepts dramatically. The Arts faculty includes plays and readings in its broadcasting output, while Mathematics have developed animation techniques for diagrams and graphs.

Tuition and counselling

Although the correspondence material and broadcasts are designed to help students learn independently, personal tuition and counselling is also available. Part-time tutors – mainly recruited from the teaching staffs of other universities and colleges – are each responsible for about 12–20 Open University students. Tutors grade and comment on written assignments, hold face-to-face tutorials for groups of students at local study centres, and are available to help individuals with their study problems.

When a student begins his studies at foundation level, he is assigned to a tutor-counsellor who helps with the academic content of the course and helps him make the best use of the teaching system.

A student's tutor-counsellor continues to act as his personal advisor throughout his Open University studies. On higher level courses when the subject matter becomes more specialised, each student also has one or more course tutors who are responsible for his face-to-face and correspondence tuition.

Students meet their tutor-counsellors and course tutors at study centres which are usually nearby their homes. There are more than 260 study centres – 204 in England, 22 in Scotland, 24 in Wales, nine in Northern Ireland and one each on Jersey and the Isle of Man.

Study centres are usually located in local colleges or other education centres. They are equipped with television, radio, and tape replay facilities for students who miss broadcasts or want to view them again. About 170 of the centres are equipped with computer terminals, so that students taking courses which include computing can gain practical experience.

Study centres also offer an opportunity for students to discuss their work with each other.

At second and higher level, students are encouraged to form self-help discussion groups which can provide a valuable additional learning experience.

Summer schools

For foundation courses and some higher level courses (particularly in science and technology) students must attend a one-week residential summer school. These are held on the campuses of residential universities between mid-July and early September.

In 1977 over 30,000 students were expected to attend summer schools at 12 host universities and two colleges. In addition, 211 students on the University's ecology course attended summer schools at five centres run with the Field Studies Council.

The schools are staffed by Open University academics and part-time tutors and often by teaching staff of the host university. Summer school is an intensive week of full-time study in a traditional university setting. The residential week includes lectures, seminars, field work, laboratory work and informal discussions.

Assignments

Assignments are an important part of the teaching system because they allow students to assess their own progress. Tutor-marked assignments (TMAs) are mainly written work, and range from a series of short answers to medium length essays. There is also a trend in higher-level courses to project-type assignments which involve experimental or research work and the collection and analysis of data. Computer-marked assignments (CMAs) consist of multiple choice questions. Students complete and return these to the University's headquarters in Milton Keynes where they are marked by the University computer.

Overall grades from both types of assignments are reported back to students, usually within two or three weeks. Tutors add their comments and detailed notes to the marked scripts: this 'dialogue' with the student can become a valuable part of correspondence tuition. Model answers are sometimes provided with the results of CMAs.

At the end of each course every student takes a three-hour written examination. Exams are taken at the end of October and in early November. In common with all other British universities, Open University examinations are scrutinized by independent external examiners to ensure that academic standards are maintained. The exam result combined with assignment grades throughout the year determines whether or not a student earns his credit. (He also has to comply with certain regulations such as the payment of fees, attendance at compulsory summer school, and the return of home experiment kits.)

OPPOSITE PAGE *Students on a geography field trip during a summer school.*

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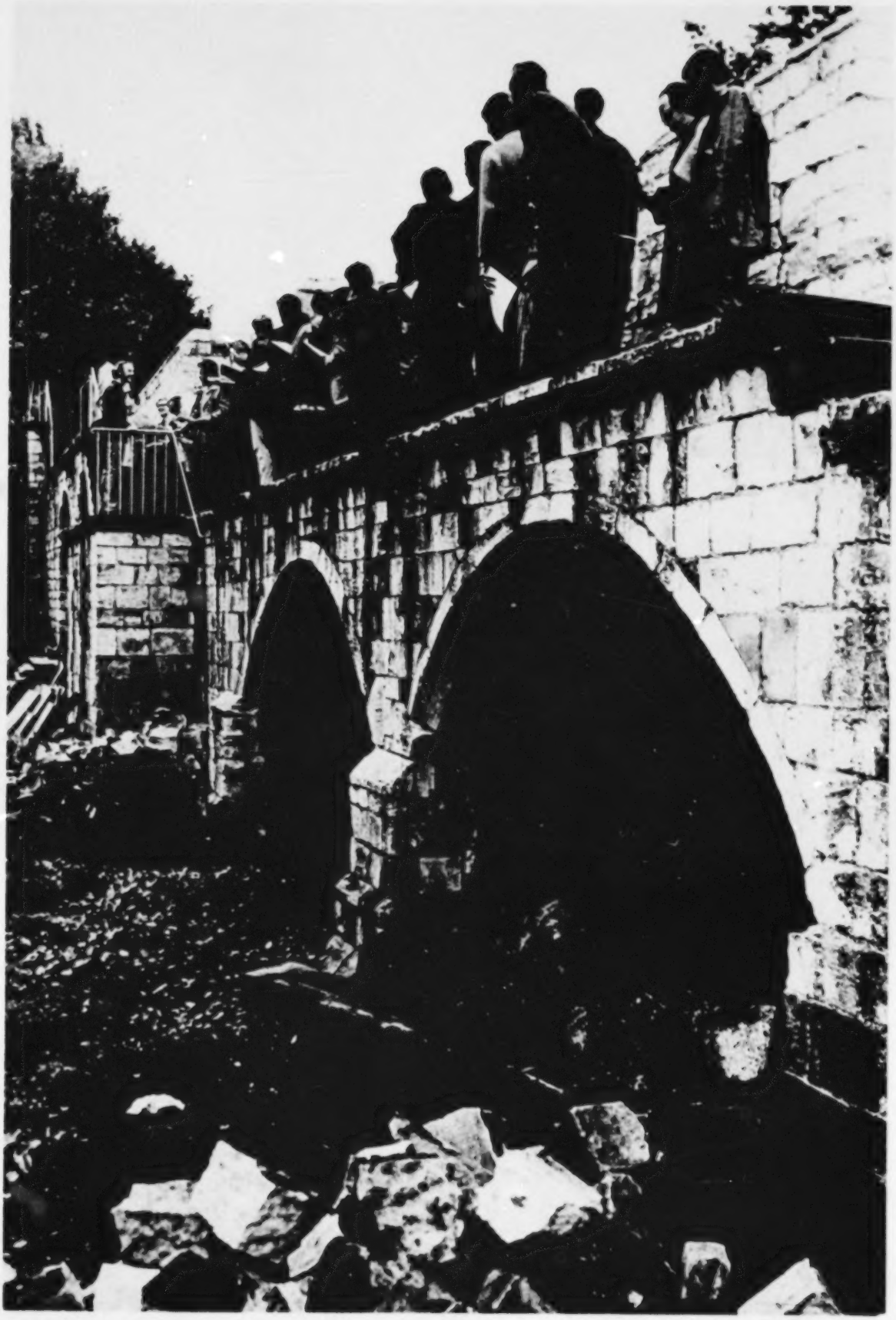


Course teams

The Open University has not only evolved a unique combination of teaching techniques, it has also originated a new method of course production. Courses are prepared by 'course teams' – groups of academic and support staff who combine their expertise to produce the multi-media package which forms the basis of the student's work. Teams vary in size from 30 members or more to groups as small as three or four.

A team may include academic staff from the same discipline, or several different disciplines and sometimes more than one faculty. Other members of the team usually include BBC television and radio producers, a member of the University's Institute of Educational Technology who advises on course structure, a staff tutor who watches over the course's requirements in the regions (engaging part-time tutors, organizing time and space in study centres) and a course assistant. An editor and designer assist with the production of written material.

In addition to Open University staff, outside consultants – experts in the field – are often asked to criticize early drafts of the course. Sometimes consultants write whole units themselves; they often appear on radio and television programmes.

The course team chairman co-ordinates the diverse activities of the different team members and oversees course production. He is responsible for the content and academic level of the course and integration of successive units. He makes sure the course is on schedule and within the planned budget.

Most course teams divide into smaller working groups to write particular units. When they all come together in a course team meeting, drafts are revised, illustrations are chosen to suit the text, and artwork is prepared by graphic designers and artists in the University's Media Development Department.

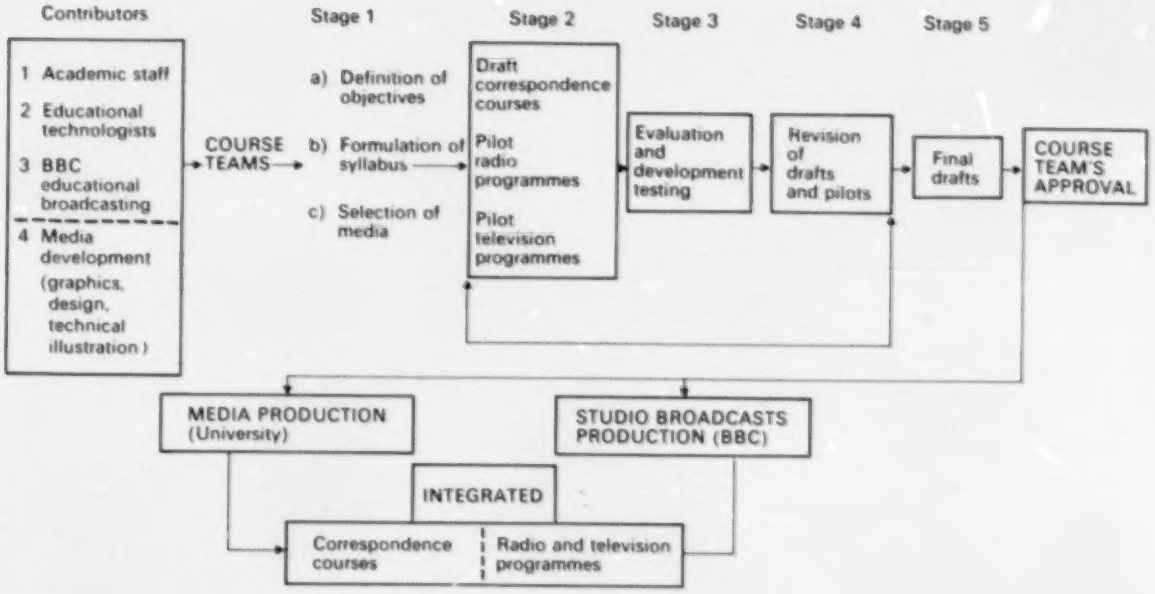
BBC producers plan television and radio programmes while course units are being written – this ensures that broadcasts and written material are closely linked. Many of the BBC producers have academic backgrounds in specialist subjects as well as production skills in broadcasting.

Pilot broadcasts and draft written material sometimes undergo a development testing stage to test student response. Course team members of the University's Institute of Educational Technology ask samples of Open University students (usually 30) to assess the level of difficulty and workload of proposed units before the course team approves their production.

The Media Production Department of the University – which includes professional editors, illustrators and designers – then prepares the manuscripts for printing. As the written material is being produced, the BBC and academic staff record the television and radio programmes. Then the broadcasts are transmitted into students' homes as they receive their correspondence material through the post.

In this way, the collective effort of the course team, who oversee the course from the start to finish, brings together the separate course components into a unified teaching package.

An outline of course production



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The Walton Hall headquarters.

5 Staff

In March 1977 the University employed 2,247 full-time staff in the following categories:

288 central academic
196 regional academic
178 related faculty staff (such as course and research assistants)
364 administrative staff
101 technical
952 secretarial and clerical
168 artisans, ancillary, catering and printing

About 1,706 of these are employed at the University's headquarters at Milton Keynes, a 70-acre site in north Buckinghamshire. The centre of the site is a manor house called Walton Hall which gives the site its name. Walton Hall and the purpose-built new buildings which surround it cover about 30,000 square metres. One major addition, a building for the Science and Technology faculties, is being completed, and a broadcasting studio complex is planned for the BBC/OU productions department, currently situated at Alexandra Palace in North London.

The Open University central headquarters at Walton Hall is not a campus in the conventional sense. There are no classrooms or residential facilities – but instead there are buildings that house the publishing operation and correspondence ,mailing, as well as office space for administrative and academic staff.

At Walton Hall the academics are outnumbered by administrative and service personnel who monitor the complex structure and teaching system of the University. They process admissions data and examinations, allocate summer schools and oversee regional tutorial services.

As computer technology is vital to the organization of the University, a large computing staff working on twenty-four-hour shifts process student and tutor records, computer-marked assignments, University finance and stock control and service the mailing schedule and other operations.

Central academics are grouped into six different faculties – Arts, Social Sciences, Educational Studies, Mathematics, Science and Technology. There are no departments within the faculties although there are specialists within subject areas. Central academic staff do not work individually (i.e., lecturing to students as in most universities), but as members of course teams. They write course units, help produce related television and radio broadcasts and develop supplementary teaching materials.

The production department of the University includes a publishing division, design studio and mailing unit. The publishing division has a staff of 51. There are 29 designers in the design studio including specialist typographers, illustrators and cartographers, as well as five staff photographers.

The Open University has a small print shop at Walton Hall which employs 19 people (ten per cent of the University's printing is done in-house). Correspondence Services, which includes the mailing department, has a staff of 62 and the Wellingborough Warehouse, which sends out home experiment kits and holds reserve stocks of correspondence texts, employs 93 people.

The University is also served by more than 350 BBC staff, wholly engaged in Open University productions and currently working in North London.

Regional staff

In addition to the University's headquarters at Walton Hall, there are thirteen regional offices throughout the country – ten in England, and one each in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Each regional office is manned by a regional director; staff tutors and senior counsellors, and a small administrative staff who oversee the University's organization at the local level.

Regional offices are responsible for the 260 study centres where students come into personal contact with the University through the part-time tutoring and counselling staff. There are 5,262 part-time tutor-counsellors and course tutors employed in the regions.

Part-time staff are selected by the University's staff tutors and senior counsellors who are based in regional offices. The regional offices supervise the part-time staff and allocate students to them; they are responsible to the central Regional Tutorial Services department at Walton Hall which co-ordinates their activities.

6

The Open University is designed for adult independent learners. No qualifications are needed to apply for the University; applicants are only required to be 21 or over[2] and resident in the UK. There is also an arrangement for some merchant seamen and British servicemen stationed in Germany and Cyprus to take Open University degrees.

Places are offered on a first-come first-served basis within three constraints. There are course quotas (applications for Arts Social Sciences far exceed those for Maths Science Technology). The University also tries to keep a fair balance between the various regions of the country (London and South-East England have more applications in proportion to their share of the population). Finally, offers of places are kept broadly in line with the occupational groups of applicants.

Special arrangements exist for admitting applicants with physical or other disabilities who may find degree-level study difficult at residential universities. Provision is also made by the Home Office for a certain number of prison inmates to take Open University courses.

[2] In 1976 a research project allowed a small number of students aged between 18 and 21 to be admitted, at the request of the Department of Education and Science.

TABLE 2 APPLICATIONS AND ADMISSIONS 1971-77

For	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
*Applications	43,444	35,182	32,046	35,011	52,537	49,956	45,293
Places available	25,000	20,500	17,000	15,000	20,000	17,000	20,000
Provisionally registered new students	24,220	20,501	16,895	14,976	19,823	16,271	20,097
Finally registered new students	19,581	15,716	12,680	11,336	14,830	12,230	14,650
Total student body	19,581	31,902	38,424	42,636	49,358	51,000	57,820

*These figures include invalid applications that may not be transferred to the computer file.

Students

Applications close in June each year and places for the following year are offered in July, August and September. The teaching year begins in February. New students are allowed a three-month trial period to see if they can cope with their studies as well as other commitments – their families and full-time jobs. They pay an initial tuition fee of £16 per course, and are not asked to pay the remainder of the fee until April. By then they have had three months' studying with the University to decide whether they want to go ahead with their degree programme. About 25 per cent of provisionally registered students who start in February decide not to continue in April. But of those who do continue, about 70 per cent will complete the year and earn a credit.

Student numbers

Applications to the Open University have risen over the last three years (Table 2), but the number of places available is determined by a grant from the Department of Education and Science. The grant sets an upper limit for the whole student body. Because continuing students may take up to six years to work through the system, the number of places available for new students each year has to be curtailed. In 1977 the number of places for new students was 20,000 out of the total of some 45,293 who applied.

Student characteristics

While the ages of students range from 21 to over 70, 60 per cent of students are in their late twenties or thirties (Table 3). The Open University has a higher percentage of female students than other British universities and applications from women have steadily increased over the years.

As the Open University becomes more well known to a broader base of the population, the character of the student body is changing. In the University's earlier years the largest proportion of applicants were teachers

TABLE 3
NEW STUDENTS BY SEX AND DATE OF BIRTH

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Total number of finally registered students = 100%	19,581	15,716	12,680	11,336	14,830	12,230
Sex	%	%	%	%	%	%
Male	73.0	66.0	64.8	61.9	56.8	57.8
Female	27.0	34.0	35.2	38.1	43.2	42.2
Date of Birth						
Post 1945	9.2	19.8	29.4	36.5	40.6	41.7
1936-1945	38.6	40.2	40.1	36.7	34.2	33.3
1926-1935	31.0	24.7	20.2	18.1	17.1	16.6
1916-1925	17.1	12.3	8.0	6.9	6.2	6.5
Pre 1916	3.9	3.0	2.3	1.8	1.9	1.9

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and professional people; now applicants in manual and routine non-manual occupations are approaching a third of all applications (Table 4).

Applicants with minimal educational qualifications are coming to the University in increasing numbers. In 1975 34·7 per cent of new students had less than 'A' level qualifications. For 1974 their share was 27·3 per cent (Table 5). As awareness of the University becomes more widespread, it is reasonable to expect a gradual increase over the years in the number of applicants without previous educational qualifications.

Graduates

Nearly 6000 students graduated from the Open University in 1976; a total of 21,000 students have earned BA(Open) degrees over the past four years (Table 6).

'By graduating these students are now offering the most convincing proof of their remarkable staying power,' said Sir Walter Perry, Vice-Chancellor of the University. 'Their success is the best answer to those critics who prophesied a drop-out of more than 90 per cent.' In fact, 50 per cent of the students who joined in the first year have now graduated.

Twenty-four per cent of 1976 graduates had less than normal entry qualifications for university.

Graduates from the manual and routine non-manual occupations have gone up from nine per cent last year to eleven per cent. Although teachers remain the largest occupation group, their share continues to decrease. They have declined to 47 per cent of graduates from 53 per cent last year and 86 per cent in 1972, the first year of graduation.

Women, another group often considered as educationally disadvantaged, make up an increased share of the new graduates. They are 37 per cent this year compared with 34 per cent in 1976, and, as regards occupation, housewives are still the second largest group with an increased share up from 11 per cent to 13 per cent.

Another measure of the increasing success of the less qualified student is a rise in the number of graduates who could not claim exemption from any credits needed for an OU degree. These exemptions are awarded to students who have successfully studied at the higher educational level before joining the University.

The number of graduates without these credit exemptions rose to 25 per cent this year as against 17 per cent last year and five per cent in 1974.

TABLE 4
OCCUPATIONAL ANALYSIS OF APPLICANTS*

For	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
Total number of applicants on computer file 100%	34,222	30,414	33,220	49,550	50,340	48,234
Occupational Group	%	%	%	%	%	%
At home	11.0	13.0	14.6	14.3	13.8	13.8
Armed forces	1.6	2.2	2.6	2.5	2.8	2.5
Admin & managers	4.6	4.3	3.8	4.3	4.6	4.5
Education	30.2	29.6	29.0	24.0	23.1	23.2
Professions & arts	12.6	11.6	11.7	11.1	11.5	11.5
Scientists & engineers	4.4	3.7	3.0	3.1	3.2	2.9
Technical personnel	11.9	11.2	9.8	10.0	10.2	10.2
Skilled trades	3.0	3.1	3.0	4.0	4.1	3.7
Other manual	2.3	2.2	2.5	3.4	3.3	2.9
Communications & transport	1.3	1.6	1.5	2.1	2.2	2.1
Clerical & office	9.4	9.8	10.1	11.7	11.3	11.4
Shop & personnel	4.4	4.4	4.2	5.4	5.3	5.2
Not working	3.1	3.1	4.1	3.9	4.3	5.9
In institutions	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.1	0.1

*Excluding 18 to 21-year-olds

TABLE 5 EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND OF FINALLY REGISTERED NEW STUDENTS

	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976
Total number of finally registered new students = 100%	19,581	15,716	12,680	11,336	14,830	12,230
	%	%	%	%	%	%
No formal qualifications	6.3	7.5	7.8	7.5	9.7	8.5
CSE, RSA	1.6	2.9	2.8	2.4	2.9	2.8
GCE O level 1-4 subjects	5.3	7.0	7.2	6.9	9.4	9.1
GCE O level 5+ subjects	10.4	12.2	11.6	10.5	12.7	12.0
GCE A level 1 subject	3.6	4.2	4.0	4.3	4.8	4.6
GCE A level 2+ subjects	9.7	9.6	9.5	10.2	11.2	11.7
ONC or OND	3.4	4.5	3.9	3.6	3.3	4.1
HNC or HND	10.8	10.8	9.4	8.3	7.6	8.6
Teacher's certificate	31.4	27.3	29.6	30.5	27.3	26.9
University diploma	9.1	7.8	7.6	7.9	7.9	8.5
University degree	4.2	5.5	6.1	6.6	3.1	3.0
No information	4.0	0.7	0.6	1.1	0.1	0.2

TABLE 6 STUDENT PROGRESS TO GRADUATION

Total number of finally registered students	1971		1972		1973		1974		1975		
	19,581		15,716		12,680		11,336		14,830		
Graduating in	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	No.	%	Total
1972	902	4.6									902
1973	3,306	17.0	321	2.0							3,627
1974	2,637	13.5	2,292	14.6	252	2.0					5,181
1975	1,647	8.2	1,743	11.1	1,860	14.6	217	1.9			5,467
1976	1,251	6.1	1,344	8.5	1,486	11.4	1,689	14.6	225	1.5	5,995
Total	9,743	49.4	5,700	35.9	3,598	30.0	1,906	16.5	225	1.5	21,172

Photo by Colin Davey, Camera Press London

7 University structure

The administrative structure of the Open University is similar to those of other British universities. There are three honorary posts: Chancellor, Pro-Chancellor and Treasurer. The Vice-Chancellor is the University's executive head (assisted by four Pro-Vice-Chancellors who deal with specific policy areas) and the Secretary supervises the administration.

Academic deans head each of the six faculties and there are directors of study responsible for the Institute of Educational Technology and Regional Tutorial Services.

University policy is made by means of a committee structure established within the framework of the Royal Charter granted in 1969. The Charter prescribes the functions and membership of the University Council and its Finance Committee, the Senate, the General Assembly and Academic Advisory Committee.

The Council, under the chairmanship of the Pro-Chancellor, is the University's governing body. Council membership is part-time and drawn largely from outside the University. Its members are appointed by the Privy Council, a number of national bodies, local authority associations, the Royal Society and the BBC. There are also six members of the academic staff appointed by Senate, two students and two members of the part-time tutorial staff appointed by the General Assembly, the Chairman of the Academic Advisory Committee and the officers of the University. The Council has power to co-opt an additional eight members in order to achieve a reasonable balance of membership. It meets nine times a year.

The Senate determines academic policy. Senate membership consists of all members of the academic staff, elected representatives of the part-time tutorial staff and of students, and various non-academic full-time staff. Current membership of the Senate is over 580. Under the chairmanship of the Vice-Chancellor, Senate is subject to the powers of Council in all non-academic matters. It meets four times a year.

Four additional boards formulate policy. The Academic Board oversees the academic and tutorial nature of courses and the Student Affairs and Awards Board supervises degree structure and other matters concerning student registration; these boards report to Senate. The Planning Board which carries out overall planning at both a strategic and resource allocation level, reports both to the Senate and the Council. These three boards all have faculty representation but the Staff Board, which deals with matters concerning University staff, is composed of Council members and reports solely to the Council. The six faculties have their own boards which study matters referred to them by the four policy boards.

The Finance Committee, under the chairmanship of the Treasurer, deals with matters of finance and accounting policy.

The University has several advisory committees with external membership and most of these are responsible to the Council. The Academic Advisory Committee is directly responsible to the Senate.

Students are represented on many of the University's major policy-making bodies – including Council, Senate, the Academic Board, Planning Board, and the Student Affairs and Awards Board.

Student participation

There are two principal channels of student participation: the consultative structure and the Students' Association. The consultative structure is organized in a three-tier pyramid, with its base at the study centres, each of which has (in theory, at least) a consultative committee of students and part-time staff. The active study centre committees elect representatives of both students and part-time staff to regional consultative committees, where they are joined by appointed members of the regional staffs. These in turn elect student and part-time staff representatives to the Central Consultative Committee, whose membership includes both regional and central staff. Many matters of policy are referred to the consultative committees for comment and discussion.

In addition, there is the annual General Assembly which brings together not only the Central Consultative Committee members but also other students and part-time tutorial staff from all the regions and representatives of Senate. It comments on any matter of general concern to the Senate.

All students are automatically members of the Open University Students' Association (OUSA). This has some 200 branches throughout the country, each based on one or more study centres. A national delegate conference is held each year to debate policy and elect an executive. OUSA is financed by a grant from the University, and maintains a central secretariat. The Association is responsible for electing student representatives to all the University's main committees.

Another means of student participation and involvement is *Sesame*, a newspaper circulated eight times a year to all students and staff. It provides a medium for discussion and informal communication among the University's widely dispersed student body. A similar purpose is fulfilled by the radio and television *Open Forum* programmes.

Students at a study centre.

8. Finance

Like all other British universities, the Open University is financed largely from public funds, though at present on a somewhat different basis. Most UK universities bid for resources every five years through the University Grants Committee. As the Open University's needs have changed and will change rapidly in its initial years, it operates on a triennial grant funded directly from the Department of Education and Science.

About 89 per cent of the University's income comes from this source, just under ten per cent from student fees, and the other one per cent is obtained from marketing course materials and research grants.

The capital cost of the University until the end of 1976 was approximately £10.9 million and the Department of Education and Science approved the following grants for nett recurrent expenditure:

1970*	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977
£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m	£m
2.2	6.0	7.8	10.0	12.7	16.3	21.7	26.5

*April to December

A major element in the University's costs is broadcasting. Each year the BBC produces about 300 television and 300 radio programmes in partnership with the Open University. The agreement between the BBC and the University also provides for transmission of programmes on the BBC network for up to 30 hours per week in each medium. The copyright of all programmes is held by the University. In 1977 this contract with the BBC accounts for about £4.1 million of the University's expenditure.

Cost effectiveness

The Open University produces graduates much more cheaply than do other universities.

Campus universities must provide laboratories, libraries and lecture theatres for residential students, but the Open University saves these capital costs because its students live and study at home. And the students are working adults, who continue to contribute to the economy while earning their degrees.

The University achieves additional economies by its method of course production: a relatively small central academic staff produce teaching materials that reach a large student population. The use of correspondence courses and broadcasting imposes a high fixed cost of production, but allows major economies of scale as student numbers rise. The cost of producing a course unit or television programme is the same for one student or thousands.

Student fees

The current tuition fee for an Open University course is £45, plus the cost of set books (from £2 to 30 per full-credit course, averaging about £11). All foundation and some higher level courses have a week's residential summer school which costs around £45. There is also a £10 refundable deposit on home experiment kits for a full-credit course.

Most local education authorities give student grants towards the cost of summer school and many employers help with fees and book costs; so the average outlay for the student is in the region of £100 per course (about £600 for the six-credit degree).

9 Influence

The Open University, Britain's experiment in mass higher education, is now justifying the faith of its early supporters.

Within Britain, academics who may once have been sceptical about the University's open teaching system now recognize that Open University degree courses are as rigorous and demanding as any. This recognition is evidenced in a number of ways – London University, for example, has admitted students without conventional entry qualifications on the basis of their completing some Open University courses. Sussex, Kent and Salford Universities and Liverpool Polytechnic have exempted students with Open University credits from the first year of their undergraduate courses. Oxford has accepted Open University graduates to study for higher degrees.

The University's teaching materials are used widely in other universities and higher educational institutions; its correspondence texts are sold in considerable quantities through bookshops. Many schools and colleges now recommend Open University television and radio broadcasts to their own students. Because the University's programmes are transmitted on the national network, the broadcast material is also available to thousands of casual viewers.

The Open University's success in Britain has created international interest in its teaching-at-a-distance techniques and systems. Open University Educational Enterprises Ltd, which is owned by the University, sells correspondence texts, films, tapes and home experiment kits not only within the UK but also to many other countries throughout the world.

The University's experience in operating an open teaching system is also helping in the creation of similar institutions around the world, such as the Free University in Iran, Everyman's University in Israel, and the People's University in Pakistan.

Because of worldwide interest and constant demand for information and advice, the University formed a Consultancy Service to help government departments, overseas agencies and institutions establish their own open teaching systems. This is now being reorganized as a centre for external assistance and collaboration, with a larger staff.

The Open University's cost effective methods of distance teaching offer a wide range of solutions to many pressing educational problems. Distance teaching can reach a vast dispersed student population with limited man-power/teaching resources at reasonable costs: this provides not only new possibilities for university-level education in Britain but also other types of education in other environments.

Correspondence texts have been translated into Italian, Spanish, Dutch and Danish.

Enquiries

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The Open University
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ENGLAND
Tel: Milton Keynes 74066

General information
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ENGLAND
Tel: Milton Keynes 74066

In America
Open University Educational Enterprises Ltd. has a subsidiary to handle marketing in the USA. It is:
Open University Educational Media Inc.
110 East 59th Street
New York City
Tel (Area code 212) 935 8965
The Open University's American Office is at the same address:
The British Open University Foundation Inc.
110 East 59th Street
New York City
Tel (Area code 212) 935 8965
Both these offices deal with Canada and Latin America as well as the USA.

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Appendix 1

Administrative personnel

Officers of the University

Chancellor The Right Honourable Lord Gardiner of Kittisford, Hon LLD, DUniv

Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of Council Sir Frederick Warner, BSc, Hon DTech, Hon DSc, CEng, FIChemE, FIMecE, MConsE

Vice-Chancellor Sir Walter Perry, OBE, MD, DSc, FRCPE, FRSE

Treasurer Sir Henry Benson, GBE, CBE, FCA, ACA (Hons)

Pro-Vice-Chancellors

Mr. N.W. Gowar, BSc, MPhil, FIMA
Professor L. J. Haynes, BSc, PhD, DIC, ARCS, FRIC
Mrs. Naomi E. S. McIntosh, BA
Professor D. F. Swift, BSc, MA, PhD

Secretary A. Christodoulou, MA

Deans and directors of studies

Dean and Director of Studies, Faculty of Arts
Professor J. Ferguson, MA, BD, FIAL

Dean and Director of Studies, Faculty of Educational Studies
Professor P. Williams, MA, BSc, PhD, FBPsS

Dean and Director of Studies, Faculty of Mathematics
Professor R. M. Pengelly, BSc, PhD, FBCS

Dean and Director of Studies, Faculty of Science
Professor M. J. Pentz, MScPhys, MScEng

Dean and Director of Studies, Faculty of Social Sciences
Professor M. Drake, MA, PhD
(From January 1, '78: A. T. Blowers, BA, MLitt)

Dean and Director of Studies, Faculty of Technology
Professor J. J. Sparkes, BSc, PhD, CEng, MIEE, SMIEEE

Director, Institute of Educational Technology
Professor D. G. Hawkridge, MA, MEd, STD, PhD, ABPsS

Director of Studies, Regional Tutorial Services
R. H. Beevers, MA

Regional directors

Regional Director, Region 01 London
K. Urwin, MA, DoctUParis, DoctUCaen, Laureate of the French Academy, Chevalier des Palmes Academiques, Barrister-at-Law

Regional Director, Region 02 South
R. H. Cosford, MA, M Litt

Regional Director, Region 03 South West
D. M. Buckingham, BA

Regional Director, Region 04 West Midlands
P. Salway, MA, PhD, FSA

Regional Director, Region 05 East Midlands
N. F. Woods, LLB, ACIS

Regional Director, Region 06 East Anglia
Patience Burne, MA

Regional Director, Region 07 Yorkshire
J. M. Bradford, BA, MA

Regional Director, Region 08 North West
M. E. Richardson, MA

Regional Director, Region 09 North
A. P. Miller, BCom

Welsh Director, Region 10 Wales
H. H. Williams, PhD, DSc

Scottish Director, Region 11 Scotland
G. K. W. Arkieson, DFC, MA, LLB

Northern Ireland Director, Region 12 Northern Ireland
D. G. Macintyre, MA MEd

Regional Director, Region 13 South East
P. Princep, MSc, ABPsS

Appendix 2

Regional offices

Region 01 London
(from September 1977)
The Open University,
London Region,
New College,
527 Finchley Road,
LONDON NW3 7BE.
Tel 01-794 0611

Region 02 South
The Open University,
Southern Region,
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OXFORD OX1 5HR.
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Region 03 South West
The Open University,
South West Region,
41 Broad Street,
BRISTOL BS1 2EP
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Region 04 West Midlands
The Open University,
West Midlands Region,
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Harborne,
BIRMINGHAM B17 9NB
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Region 05 East Midlands
The Open University,
East Midlands Region,
The Octagon,
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East Anglian Region,
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Region 07 Yorkshire
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Yorkshire Region,
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LEEDS LS2 8JU
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The Open University,
North Western Region,
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Chorlton-cum-Hardy,
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Region 09 North
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Gosforth,
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Region 10 Wales
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Region 12 Northern Ireland
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Region 13 South East
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Orkney Isles
Western Isles
Shetland Isles
Highland
Grampian
11
Tayside
Fife
Central
Lothian
EDINBURGH
Strathclyde
Borders
Dumfries & Galloway
Northumberland
NEWCASTLE UPON TYNE
Tyne & Wear
09
Durham
Cleveland
Cumbria
North Eastern
BELFAST
Western
12
Southern
South Eastern
Education and Library Boards in N. Ireland
Isle of Man
07
North Yorkshire
Lancashire
West Yorkshire
LEEDS
North Humberside
South Humberside
Merseyside
MANCHESTER
South Yorks
08
Cheshire
Notts
Lincolnshire
Derbyshire
Clwyd
Gwynedd
NOTTINGHAM
05
Staffs
04
Salop
Leicestershire
Norfolk
10
BIRMINGHAM
Cambridgeshire
CAMBRIDGE
Suffolk
Powys
Hereford & Worcester
Warwicks
Northamptonshire
Beds
06
Herts
Essex
Dyfed
Buckinghamshire
OXFORD
Gloucestershire
Oxfordshire
01
LONDON
Gwent
CARDIFF
BRISTOL
Berkshire
Avon
Wiltshire
West Glamorgan
Mid Glamorgan
South Glamorgan
02
Surrey
13
Kent
Hampshire
EAST GRINSTEAD
W. Sussex
E. Sussex
Somerset
03
Dorset
Devon
Cornwall
Isles of Scilly
Channel Isles
Regional Offices •

1978 courses

Appendix 3

Course title	Credit rating	Level
ARTS		
*The age of revolutions	1	2
An arts foundation course	1	Foundation
The development of instruments and their music	1	3
Drama	1	3
The early Roman Empire and the rise of Christianity	½	2
Elements of music	½	2
*English urban history 1500-1750	½	3
Great Britain 1750-1950: sources and historiography	1	4
History of architecture and design 1890-1939	1	3
*History of mathematics	½	2
Man's religious quest	1	2
*Modern art from 1848 to the present: styles and social implications	½	3
The nineteenth-century novel and its legacy	1	3
Problems of philosophy	1	3
Renaissance and Reformation	1	2
The revolutions of 1848	½	3
*Science and belief: from Copernicus to Darwin	½	2
*Science and rise of technology since 1800	½	2
Thought and reality: central themes in Wittgenstein's philosophy	1	4
*Twentieth-century poetry	1	3
*War and society	1	3
SOCIAL SCIENCES		
Cognitive psychology	1	3
Comparative government and politics	½	2
*Decision making in Britain	1	2
Fundamentals of human geography	1	2
*The handicapped person in the community	½	1
Historical data and the social sciences	1	3
*International politics and foreign policy	½	3
An introduction to psychology	½	2
Making sense of society	1	Foundation
Mass communication and society	½	3
Microeconomics	½	2
National income and economic policy	½	2
*Patterns of inequality	1	3
People and organizations	½	3
*People and work	½	3
Public administration	½	3
Regional analysis and development	½	3
Research methods in education and the social sciences	1	3
*Social psychology	1	3
Social work, community work and society	1	2
The sociological perspective	½	2
Soviet government and politics	½	3
Statistical sources	½	2
Understanding economics	1	2
Urban development	1	2
MATHEMATICS		
An algorithmic approach to computing	½	2
Analysis	½	2
Complex analysis	½	3
Computer-based information systems	½	3
*Computing and computers	½	2
Differential geometry	½	3
Elementary mathematics for science and technology	½	2
Fundamentals of statistical inference	½	3
*Integration and normed spaces	½	3
Linear mathematics	1	2
Mathematics: a foundation course	1	Foundation
Mechanics and applied calculus	½	2
Modelling by mathematics	½	Foundation
Numerical computation	½	3
Partial differential equations of applied mathematics	½	3
*Statistics: an interdisciplinary approach	½	2
Topics in pure mathematics	1	2
SCIENCE		
Biochemistry	1/6	2
Biochemistry and molecular biology	½	3
*Biological bases of behaviour	½	2
Comparative physiology	1/3	2
Earth science topics and methods	½	3
*The Earth's physical resources	1/3	2
Ecology	½	3
Environment	1/6	2
Genes and development	1/6	2
Genetics	½	2
Geology	1/3	2
Geochemistry	1/6	2
Geophysics	1/6	2
Images and information	½	2
An introduction to the chemistry of carbon compounds	1/3	2
The nature of chemistry	½	3
Oceanography	½	3
Physiology of cells and organisms	½	3
Principles of chemical processes	½	2
Quantum theory and atomic structure	½	3
Science: a foundation course	1	Foundation
Solids, liquids and gases	½	2
Structure, bonding and the periodic law	1/3	2
*Curriculum design and development	1	2
Decision making in British education systems	½	2
Economics and education policy	½	3
Education, economy and politics	½	3
Education and the urban environment	½	3
*Language and learning	½	2
*Management in education	½	3
*Methods of educational enquiry: an empirical approach	½	3
Personality and learning	1	2
*Reading development	½	2
Schooling and society	½	2
*Technology for teachers	½	2
Urban education	½	3
TECHNOLOGY		
Art and environment	½	2
Control engineering	½	3
Control of technology	½	3
The digital computer	½	2
*Electromagnetics and electronics	½	2
*Environment control and public health	½	2
Food production systems	½	2
Instrumentation	½	2
Introduction to engineering mechanics	½	2
An introduction to materials	½	2
*Man-made futures: design and technology	½	2
The man-made world: a foundation course	1	Foundation
Materials processing	½	3
Materials under stress	½	3
*Systems behaviour	½	2
*Systems management	½	2
Systems modelling	½	3
Systems performance: human factors and systems failures	½	3
*Telecommunications systems	½	3

*These courses may be taken as part of the associate student programme as well as the undergraduate programme.